

Literacy Links

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Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

Spotlight on...

Nonfiction



"It is well accepted that nonfiction reading is an important part of functioning in daily life."

Tony Stead, Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension with Nonfiction K-5, 2006



Think about how often you read email, explore Internet websites, read menus and road signs, or peruse catalogs and magazines? Nonfiction reading accounts for a vast majority of the reading we as adults do on a daily basis yet its presence in elementary classrooms is limited. Children are fascinated with the real world. Nonfiction capitalizes on and expands this natural fascination. In addition to exploring the real world, nonfiction exposes students to various writing styles and new vocabulary as well as encourages their interest in inquiry or research.

Two authors from Maine co-authored a recent publication, *Nonfiction in Focus* (Scholastic, 2005), which is devoted to effectively teaching nonfiction. Janice Kristo and Rosemary Bamford demonstrate how nonfiction can be integrated and taught within a comprehensive literacy framework. In addition, Kristo and Bamford share their wealth of knowledge about considerations for selecting and teaching with nonfiction. Some questions to consider include:

- **What type of nonfiction text is being used?** (concept, life cycle, photographic essay, survey, biography, specialized, field guide)
- **How accurate is the content of the nonfiction text?** (Check out the author's credentials, copyright date, and research methodology)
- **How is the content within the nonfiction text organized?** (organizational structures include sequential, chronological, enumerative, cause-effect, question-answer, compare-contrast)
- **What access features are used in the nonfiction text to allow readers to easily access or locate the information?** (table of contents, headings and subheadings, sidebars, glossaries, appendices, index, bulleted information, prologue, epilogue)
- **What types of visual features are included in the nonfiction text?** (dust jacket, captions, diagrams, graphs, tables, maps)
- **What style of writing is used in the nonfiction text?** (some characteristics to consider include clarity, coherence, vocabulary, leads, conclusions, voice, and figurative language)

Description of Instructional Idea...

Reading and Analyzing Nonfiction (RAN) Chart

In his latest professional resource book on nonfiction (see "Summary of Professional Literacy Text" below), Tony Stead describes his modification for the well-known KWL chart used as a graphic organizer for comprehension. In

Upcoming Events

June 26 and 27~
Maine Reading First
Summer Institute,
Augusta Civic Center

September 28-29~
New England
Reading Association
(NERA) Annual
Conference, Lowell,
MA (More
information about
this conference will
be forthcoming on
the website
(www.nereading.org)



a traditional KWL chart, students record what they 'Know' and what they 'Want to know' before reading a text. After the text is read, the students record what they 'Learned'. Stead feels that the KWL chart may be less effective for students who have limited background knowledge on the topic of the text. Another of Stead's concern is that the KWL chart may not support students in the process of digging deep enough into the content. A preoccupation that a specific piece of background knowledge (entered into the 'Know' column) is accurate might prevent students from expanding their knowledge. Stead addressed his concerns by creating the Reading and Analyzing Nonfiction (RAN) chart which includes 5 categories; each category is connected and leads into the next. A RAN chart prompts students to locate new content within the text which expands, strengthens, and clarifies their background knowledge. A more complete description of a RAN chart is included below.

What I Think I Know	Confirmed (or Yes, You Were Right)	Misconceptions	New Information	Wonderings
Allows for students to record their approximations of knowledge prior to reading	Invites students to confirm their prior knowledge based on the reading	Students recognize that not all of their prior knowledge may be accurate based on the reading	Encourages students to identify information from the text which is new for them	Based on the new information students gain, they propose questions or wonderings

Summary of Professional Literacy Text...

Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension with Nonfiction K-5

The author of the popular book, Is That a Fact?: Teaching Nonfiction Writing K-3, has recently published a new professional resource focused on building comprehension with nonfiction. Tony Stead includes four sections in this book which share his expertise and experiences of teaching comprehension using nonfiction. The first section focuses on the literal understandings gained while reading nonfiction while the next section shifts to strategies to develop interpretative understandings of nonfiction. Section 3 explores ways to evaluate information while building students' critical reading skills. Reality Checks concludes with a section which synthesizes the information and includes practical ideas, assessments, and curriculum planning ideas. The appendix in the book is full of graphic organizers, rubrics, and assessment tools.

Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension with Nonfiction K-5 by Tony Stead was published in 2006 by Stenhouse and the ISBN is 1551381958.

Children's Literature Title...

I See a Kookaburra!:

Discovering Animal Habitats Around the World

Written and illustrated by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page

The author team of Steve Jenkins and Robin Page recently created

"We want students who read nonfiction for enjoyment, to be fascinated, to discover."

Tony Stead, Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension with Nonfiction K-5, 2006



"The book to read is not the one which thinks for you, but the one which makes you think."

James McCosh

I See a Kookaburra! as their third collaborative nonfiction book. This book explores six animal habitats from different parts of the world. The journey moves from the lush forest to the scorching desert and then to the steamy jungle as it introduces readers to eight animals who live in each habitat. In a similar fashion to their earlier nonfiction titles, Jenkins and Page incorporate an "I Spy" element on the first double-page spread introducing each habitat. Readers can search for the animals within an illustration of their natural habitat. The subsequent double-page spread for each habitat displays the eight animals more clearly and accompanying labels identify the animal name.

I See a Kookaburra!: Discovering Animal Habitats Around the World was published in 2005 by Houghton Mifflin Company and the ISBN is 0618507647.

News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Reading First Summer Institute...

The Maine Reading First Summer Institute is scheduled for June 26 and 27 at the Augusta Civic Center. Joe Torgesen, the Director of the Florida Center for Reading Research, will keynote this event. A variety of break-out sessions for teachers, literacy coaches, and administrators will be available. More details and registration information about the summer institute will be attached to the May edition of *Literacy Links*.

Check it out...

The Partnership for Reading is a collaboration among three federal organizations—the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the United States Department of Education. Its mission is to share evidence-based reading research with the educational community (teachers, administrators, families, policy-makers, etc.). The website for the Partnership for Reading is unique in its ability to offer the latest evidence-based research about effective ways to teach reading through the provision of information and resources. Some of the many publications available on this website include:


- *What is Scientifically-Based Research?*
- *A Child Becomes a Reader: Proven Ideas for Parents from Research—Kindergarten through Grade 3*
- *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read*
- *Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read—A Parent Guide*

The website address for the Partnership for Reading is <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading>

Newsletter Archives

There are several earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

Edition	Spotlight Topic
March, 2005	Maine Reading First
April, 2005	Maine Reading First Course
May, 2005	Reading Fluency
June, 2005	Vocabulary
September, 2005	Phonemic Awareness
October, 2005	Phonics

	November, 2005	Comprehension
	December, 2005/January, 2006	DIBELS
	February, 2006	Literacy Centers
	March, 2006	Interactive Read Aloud
	<p>For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email janet.trembly@maine.gov</p> <p>Click here to view the Maine Reading First website http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm</p>	